New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1952

Volume XIII, Number 24 • Rachel W. Coffin, *Editor* • Week of December 1, 1952

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Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of December 1, 1952

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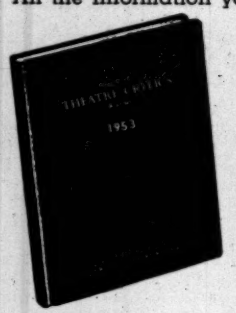

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"La Repetition ou L'Amour Puni"

New York Post
November 28, 1952

French Visitors Score In an Anouilh Drama

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

Jean-Louis Barrault's distinguished French company was in characteristically splendid form last night at the Ziegfeld Theater in a brilliant performance of Jean Anouilh's "La Repetition ou l'Amour Puni," which you and I might call "The Rehearsal or Love Punished." The Anouilh play is a frankly sentimental but bitterly disillusioned tale of the triumph of cynical worldliness over youthful innocence, and it is, as seems to be always the way with the eminent visitors, played with such graphic forcefulness and infinite style that, despite the barrier of language, it emerges as a strangely moving drama.

"La Repetition" is the story of a chateau full of weary sophisticates, a husband and wife with their lovers, and a tormented alcoholic, to which there comes an innocent young girl, who is to be the teacher of some orphans and is to act in a performance the owner of the castle is putting on of a Marivaux play. Mixing the Marivaux text with his own, Anouilh tells how the awakened host falls honorably in love with the girl's gentle guilelessness, how his wife sets out to destroy the hopeless romance with the aid of the embittered alcoholic, and how disenchantment once more returns to its customary position in the household.

When a playwright as sophisticated as Anouilh grows sentimental, even when he mixes the gloomiest pessimism with it, he can go to questionable extremes, and I grant it is quite possible that, if I could have followed the dialogue more carefully, I might have had some quibbles about the author's romantic sadness. Being able to follow it more or less only in outline, however, and aided by the remarkably vivid playing of M. Barrault and his associates, I found the drama both touching and beautiful. Indeed, so fine is the acting that the production is fascinating to watch as sheer theatrical magic.

The Performances

There are only seven characterizations in the play, and not only is each one a gem but the ensemble work seems to me a triumph of staging. I have the deepest admiration for everyone in the cast, but the portrayal that impressed me the most was that of Jacques Dacqmine as the alcoholic. His portrait of a doomed, tortured man doing something that he hated and knew was horrible is at once poignant, vivid, realistic and without excess. M. Barrault who is assuredly one of the great actors of his time, is, as always, brilliant as the host, and the other men are excellently played by Pierre Bertin and Jean-Francois Calve.

In addition to being admirable technical performers, the French visitors are the fortunate possessors of a quality of personal charm that is not to be dismissed lightly. For example, there are three actresses in the Anouilh play, and it would be difficult to find a trio of more attractive women on one stage, or anywhere else. Madeleine Renaud is once more deftly and subtly expert as the wily wife, the stunning Elina Labourdette is fascinatingly malicious as the husband's mistress, and the lovely Simone Valere is honest and moving as the young innocent. The Barrault company is certainly performing a service for our theater season.

"LA REPETITION OU L'AMOUR PUNI"

Play by Jean Anouilh; staged by Jean-Louis Barrault; decor and costumes by Jean-Denis Malcles; presented by S. Hurok at the Ziegfeld Theatre, November 27, 1952. The cast:

La Comtesse..Madeleine Renaud
M. Damiens.....Pierre Bertin
Le Comte..Jean-Louis Barrault
Hortensia....Elina Labourdette
Hero.....Jacques Dacqmine
Villebosse..Jean-Francois Calve
Lucile.....Simone Valere

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
November 28, 1952

'Repetition ou l'Amour Puni'

By WALTER F. KERR

OF THE various entertainments which the Jean-Louis Barrault-Madeleine Renaud troupe have been providing at the Ziegfeld, the current "La Repetition" is the sort of play most likely to strike American theatergoers as familiar. Jean Anouilh's little comedy of mood and melancholy is essentially realistic in manner, conversational in style. As against the broad farces, the period curios, and the graceful conceits which have comprised the body of the Barrault repertory, "La Repetition" demands of its actors a muted and accurate naturalism, a casual sense of contemporary life.

This has both its advantages and its disadvantages for admirers of the visiting ensemble. It obviously dispenses with much of the flamboyant visual excitement, the pantomimic elaboration, the nearly choreographic grace which so distinguishes these French players. At the outset M. Barrault does find opportunities for scaling a convenient ladder and for indulging in a little byplay with a fancy-ball costume. But the tone of the play is necessarily one of restraint; the performances must seem suitable for regulation Broadway fare. And the fact that the play's content is almost exclusively verbal means that a fairly decent working knowledge of French is required if the playgoer is to find his way through M. Anouilh's rueful comment on manners, morals and fashionable misery.

• • •

But pinning these ardent and athletic actors down to the current scene, and to relatively commonplace deportment, does prove one thing: their absorption with mime and the freer techniques of stylization in no way disqualifies them for realism, for the subtler modulations of human behavior. If anything, it seems to provide them with an interior security, a sort of physical and emotional reservoir, which suggests layers of depth beneath the surface of Anouilh's polished prose.

This is true of Madeleine Renaud's charming, imperious, and psychologically penetrating portrait of a conniving Comtesse, bent on circumventing her husband's impending affair with a naive little governess. Mlle. Renaud, in white wig and decidedly becoming gowns contrived by Jean-Denis Malcles, makes an enchanting worldling. But she is no mere symbol of sophistication. A devastatingly honest, sometimes harsh and sometimes nearly tragic strain runs through her flippantries, her pettish flouncings. She fights her battle with an uneasy bravado that is very revealing, and she makes it clear—when she confronts the innocent girl who is her enemy—that sophistication has its own terrors, its own embarrassments, in this complicated world.

• • •

Every bit as effective is Jaques Dacqmine as a remorseful sot whose life has run out of love. When this lost soul is counseling the young governess to put as much distance as possible between herself and the Comte, he is a warm and appealing figure. When he is crying out in contempt and dismay at the Comte's declaration that he is in love with his charge, M. Dacqmine's anguish is real and terrifying. And the passage in which he deceives the girl into running away is easily the most moving of the evening.

• • •

Simon Valere is the innocent who is caught up in a web of social and moral corruption. Innocence has a habit of turning saccharine on the stage, but Mlle. Valere manages to be much more than vacantly wistful—she drives a direct, challenging, and commonsense quality into her performance which makes it wholly three-dimensional, intensely attractive. Elina Labourdette is stunning as the Comte's established mistress, and Barrault himself—in perhaps the least complex role in the play—is as firmly authoritative, as richly varied in inflection, as ever.

"The Rehearsal" (or "Love Punished") has its limitations as spectacle, but its delicately shaded performances are reward enough.

The New York Times

November 28, 1952

Renaud-Barrault Troupe Offers Two-Act Play by Anouilh at the Ziegfeld Theatre

By HERBERT L. MATTHEWS

The Renaud-Barrault company rose magnificently to a severe test last night, which was to give reality and tenderness to a play that is essentially unreal and decidedly bitter to the taste. Perhaps we can never get to like Jean Anouilh in this country, even when he is played so superbly.

For those who are cerebrally inclined, Anouilh's play, "La Repetition ou L'Amour Puni" at the Ziegfeld, will be a joyful exercise. It is a re-creation of Marivaux's eighteenth - century comedy, "La Double Inconstance," in twentieth-century, French Existentialist terms. Anouilh tries to reproduce the keenly rational and skeptical mode of eighteenth-century thinking and its way of hiding emotions under irony and raillery.

* * *

The setting is an eighteenth century chateau and the characters are always dressed in eighteenth century costumes, for they are to give the Marivaux play and are rehearsing it. Marivaux's plot of innocent love destroyed is Anouilh's theme. Even the title, "La Répétition," means "repetition" as well as "rehearsal." The whole conception is so studied, so cleverly planned, so precious (to use a good eighteenth century term) that one tends to get a bit impatient and irritated.

A young, simple, middle-class maiden, Lucile, is set down in a snobbish, idle and aristocratic milieu. She and the head of the house, a blasé count, fall passionately in love with each other. Their love is the only pure element in a foul atmosphere, and hence all the other personages set about destroying it—which they do.

This inadequate synopsis should be enough to show the bitter and destructive nature of Anouilh's theme, and perhaps of his art as a whole. New York has known a number of his works since before the war and liked none of them except "Ring Around the Moon," which was a mild success. Yet the French consider Anouilh to be their best dramatist.

It may be that he gives apt expression to French post-war feelings—the Existentialist atmosphere—and hence is credited in France with a higher art than he possesses. His appeal is not universal and hardly can be attractive in the dynamic, optimistic, creative atmosphere of America. Pessimism, futility, cynicism and self-pity are valid materials for drama but only if they are recognized as evils and not gloried in.

The company gave the play such a wonderful interpretation last night that one almost forgot its weaknesses. For Jean-Louis Barrault the part of Tigre, the Count, is an opportunity to display his extraordinary gifts of acting—and since he is on the stage much of the time, one can be grateful to Anouilh for that. Madeleine Renaud as the Countess also creates a living, envious, elegant human being out of an improbable role. Jacques Dacqmine does whatever is possible with the ungrateful part of the alcoholic, maudlin, self-pitying friend, Hero.

* * *

Of the two other women, as of all the cast, one can only write in superlatives. Simone Valere is a picture of trembling innocence, budding love, purity, tenderness, Elina Labourdette as the friend of the Countess is as vibrantly beautiful and spiteful as the part demands.

At all times one has a sense of creation, which is no doubt the mark of a great company of actors, but not necessarily a virtue of the dramatist's. Jean-Denis Malcles' costumes are lovely but the one setting of the salon in the chateau is undistinguished.

Next week the company, which is at the Ziegfeld Theatre, will pass from the pseudo-eighteenth century to Elsinore in the Middle Ages, for we are to see at last Barrault's "Hamlet."

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

November 28, 1952

Anouilh's 'Rehearsal' Is Challenge to Actors

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Anouilh has never been much of a success in English locally, and having him done in the original French is no enhancement except to those who know the language well. "The Rehearsal" follows a familiar pattern of the playwright, introducing a figure of pure innocence into an atmosphere of jaded sophistication and intertwining the current action with that of an 18th-century play the characters are rehearsing.

The work is one of bright, brittle surface and dark undercurrents. When the Count is overcome by a noble love for the little schoolmistress the Countess is unable to face such rivalry. She tries to get the girl arrested for theft. When that fails she deliberately causes the girl to be disillusioned by an ill-fated and alcoholic hanger-on of the family.

This play may continue for years as a great challenge to actors. It is complex and clearly open to many layers of interpretation with its gloom and glitter.

Most striking is the performance of Madeleine Renaud as the Countess, wickedness incarnate yet actually quite normal in her own world of satiation, intrigue and ruthless authority.

Distracting attention to herself at the rehearsal, chummy with hidden claws toward her husband's mistress, or daintily devastating to the innocent youngster, she is always clear, always three dimensional.

Barrault again and again lifts the play with the sheer energy of his manner. He slides, imperceptibly but brilliantly, from the bored Count, to the man in love, to the character in the play and back. And the scene where he declares his love to the young girl is one of the most captivating I ever saw played in the theater.

There is a similar purity about Pierre Bertin's acting, more than ever in his scene with his ward, where the essence of the actor's purpose is miraculously distilled.

Where the play limps for me is in the lengthy, vital episode between the moody drinker and the girl, the crux of all the dark wanton cruelty that hangs over the whole play. The scene lacks the vital, illuminating, original method or manner which is the company's most precious virtue.

DAILY NEWS

November 28, 1952

Renaud, Barrault Offer Another Fancy Costume French Comedy

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The French players from the Theatre Marigny, running through their string, came forth last evening at the Ziegfeld in another costume piece, "La Repetition, ou l'Amour Puni"—meaning the rehearsal or love punished. The actors certainly do love to dress up, and I have developed a grand passion—meaning a grand passion—to see them do a play in street clothes. This won't happen, though, because next week's bill is going to be "Hamlet." The closest they've come to modern dress was in the best of their offerings so far, Franz Kafka's "The Trial."

Play Within Play.

"La Repetition, etc." is a play within a play, by Jean Anouilh. Last evening I felt that Anouilh is even duller in French than he is in the various English translations which have been washed up on these hospitable shores during the last decade. This oeuvre, or work, is about some fancy people including a count and countess who are converting their chateau into an orphanage.

What would you do if you were turning your chateau, or ranch-type house, into a hospice for parentless minors? Well, whatever you'd do, Jean Anouilh's count and countess don't do it. They decide that they shall act an old play by Marivaux in celebration, and the old play by Marivaux and the new play by Anouilh dovetail perfectly. There are lovers and mistresses in the old play and mistresses and lovers in the new one, and, what with period costumes and wigs for all, you can't tell who is going for whom.

As is customary, Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud head the company in their bright, high style. Another member of the troupe, Jacques Dacqmine, is beginning to strike me as the most interesting and talented player of the lot—and this lot of actors is, after all, extraordinarily talented. And their wig bill must be enormous.

"Time Out for Ginger"

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

November 28, 1952

Time Is Well Taken for 'Ginger'

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Things couldn't be better for theater-going funny bones, with "Time Out for Ginger" on the boards. The new comedy is hilarious all right, but it is also human and warm and touching, while it goes right on being just a touch demented.

Obviously a man with a beautiful wife and three handsome teenage daughters will find the going tough on occasion. Our hero here begs for trouble when he makes an innocent speech about the manners of the young, including a statement that nobody should have to do what he does not want to, and coming out flat against gym for girls.

Dad Is Villain and Hero.

Before the reports in the local press are dry, his daughters have circulated a petition based on his rash remarks. And before he knows it, for the sake of his own integrity, he has to support his youngest daughter's wild desire to play on the high school football team.

This should suggest where the play leads, with young Ginger waking up one morning to find herself on the cover of Life in a football helmet, and pop just before losing his job because of his unrestrained shining around the football field.

The play draws as steady a stream of laughs as any comedy in years. But what makes it such solid fun is the reality of the characters, and the authenticity of their relations toward each other. There is no villain, unless it is father, who is the hero, too. And for a premium in a thoroughly agreeable atmosphere, there is the novel picture of a mature married couple irresistibly attracted to each other, to such an extent, that they are frequently embarrassed by the members of the family whom you might expect to be caught necking.

One of Douglas' Best.

Melvyn Douglas stars as the enthusiastic father who cannot quite hide his desire for a son. It is his best part in a long time, and he gives it a thorough, understanding, wise and comical performance.

Polly Rowles is quite luscious as the mother of the family, complementing Douglas with offhand sweetness, and just the airy good humor that can conceal her real wisdom.

The three young actresses who play their daughters are all Broadway debutantes, and each of them is likely to be heard from often again. Mary Hartig is a beauty as the oldest, who took the role of "Victoria Regina" in school, to get out of gym, then quit when she discovered the character was "an old hag." Lois Smith is touching and fresh as inheritor of the role, and has some truly lovely moments when first night nerves attack her.

Heaven-Sent for Role.

Nancy Malone was heaven-sent for the role of Ginger, a daring character for any playwright to create. Miss Malone is a tomboy, determined without being unfeminine, and in the end turns out to be right in the family tradition of good looks.

The whole company is happy. Laura Pierpont is dry and witty but as warm as the rest, as a family retainer. Philip Loeb has some inspired moments as president of the bank where father works. And Roland Wood is an educator with humor, who reaches the end of his rope.

Naturally where there are so many girls there must be men. Conrad Janis is first rate as the frantic and big headed athlete who beaus the older girl, but is bested by Ginger. And Larry Robinson strike a note of quiet perfection as the youngster who tries to win Ginger by logic.

Ronald Alexander, who composed this laugh packed winner, is a welcome addition to the ranks of theater writers.

"TIME OUT FOR GINGER"

Comedy by Ronald Alexander; staged by Shepard Traube; settings by Eldon Elder; presented by Mr. Traube and Gordon Pollock in association with Don Hershey at the Lyceum Theatre, November 26, 1952. The cast:

Lizzie.....Laura Pierpont
Agnes Carol.....Polly Rowles
Howard Carol..Melvyn Douglas
Joan.....Mary Hartig
Jeannie.....Lois Smith
Ginger.....Nancy Malone
Eddie Davis.....Conrad Janis
Tommy.....Larry Robinson
Mr. Wilson.....Roland Wood
Ed Hoffman.....Philip Loeb

Journal American

November 28, 1952

It Won't Burn Up The Boards But....

By JOHN McCLAIN

MELVYN DOUGLAS and a rasher of variously-aged females succeeded last night in creating a quite pleasant evening out of something called "Time Out for Ginger," which opened at the Lyceum Theatre. This is a vacuous little story, based on the presumption that, all humans being equal, a girl has every right to play on the high school football team.

There is nothing wrong with the presumption as such, for I am sure Babe Zaharias could have made the first squad in any institution she ever attended, but as a play the premise starts to wear a little thin after the first two acts.

In the beginning you are incredulous, then you are willing to go along with the idea in a spirit of good clean fantasy, but when the author attempts to sustain it on a basis of social significance, and the heartbreak of a halfback who really wanted to be "all-woman," one is apt to blow the whistle and penalize all parties for delaying the game.

Charming Family

Ronald Alexander, the author, has created a charming family consisting of Douglas; his wife, Polly Rowles; and their three daughters, Mary Hartig, Lois Smith and Nancy Malone. He has even included Laura Pierpont, a wonderfully off-center maid.

It seems Douglas has just delivered a speech at the local high school in which he deplored current manners amongst the young and placed some of the blame on the fact that there is too much regimentation in education. Individuality and personal freedom are paramount, he said.

As a result his own household is turned upside down. His eldest daughter, a senior, renounces physical education; his second embarks on a career as an actress in the school play, and his youngest, Ginger, goes out for football. His own career in the bank is jeopardized when a magazine does one of their spreads on the intimate episodes in the family of a female tail-back.

This and much more is humorous and engaging, but it seemed to me it all went a little out of joint when the father made a great issue of the fact that he was going to have his daughter on the squad regardless of consequences. The future of the family was secondary—this kid was going to play football!

Adroit Acting

Forgetting the rather prolonged third act, Douglas delivers a sustained and adroit performance which comes close to making everything believable. His animated description of how his daughter scored a touchdown ranks with the most strenuous of the season, if not the most notable.

Nancy Malone, as his athletic daughter, combines an impudent and aggressive face with a manner that suggests she might, indeed, run a kick back 30 yards against anybody—including Michigan State.

Polly Rowles is bright and competent in that role of the wife who is married to an incorrigible individualist. She loves him dearly all these years and understands his little eccentricities and knows everything will come out all right in the end.

Philip Loeb scores solidly as a banker who looks and talks like Groucho Marx and is able, for a change, to kid about foreclosing mortgages; the other daughters, especially Mary Hartig, are extremely decorative. Shepard Traube's direction added greatly to the pace of the proceedings.

This show will not burn up the boards—but it is a moderately warm and gratifying evening in anybody's theatre.

The New York Times

November 27, 1952

AT THE THEATRE

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Life is getting too pleasant to keep on like this indefinitely. Another highly enjoyable comedy has come to town. "Time Out For Ginger" is what Ronald Alexander, the author, calls it. Melvyn Douglas and a winning cast gave it a lively performance at the Lyceum last evening.

From one point of view, it is the story of a demogogic father who confuses his home life with a wife and three daughters by making ringing public declarations about how people should behave. From another point of vew it is the story of the emotional problems of a high school girl who insists in playing football with the regular team.

* * *

For half way through the play the author seems to change his mind about what he is writing and finishes the evening with a different idea. As playwriting this is the sort of thing frowned upon by the educated classes. But since the second idea is better than the first, no objections are going to be posted here. For the theme of the tom-boy who finds herself ditched by her boy-friend for conduct unbecoming a girl leads in to some tender moments at the end. And a comedy that not only amuses but moves an audience is irresistible.

But perhaps we should regard "Time Out For Ginger" as an old-fashioned family comedy with nothing specific at stake and not insist upon identifying the theme. The relations between adults and adolescents are startling enough to be funny in their own right, and Mr. Alexander has portrayed them accurately. Howard Carol, the bank executive in the play, has three daughters in high school, all of them wrought up over matters of moral principle. Not only that, but Mr. Carol has to suffer their boy friends gladly, and occasionally give them personal advice out of his own experience.

* * *

Relations between adults and adolescents are like fluid drive in automobiles: There is a high factor of slip involved. Energy gets lost in the process. The adult thinks he is in high gear, sitting pretty and sailing along like the wind. But power is being dissipated somewhere. Mr. Carol has a very clear idea of what life should be. One of his troubles is that he puts his ideas into words that can be quoted against him. As Mr. Douglas plays the part with charm, flexibility and technical expertness, Mr. Carol is a good egg, and loved in his home. But his three high-spirited daughters go their own way under their own momentum. When they appear in party dresses in the last act, looking young, breathless and breath-taking, anyone can see that they are right and he is wrong and that the advice of adults is superfluous.

Under Shepard Traube's direction, the performance is a breeze. In designing the scenery, Eldon Elder has made a contribution to posterity. He has created a good living room without a fireplace. He has also hung an Audubon print in one corner. In this agreeable environment a lot of ingratiating actors romp through the doors and up and down the stairway.

* * *

An old hand at popular comedy, Mr. Douglas is the dynamo of the performance. His description with gestures of a football play is uproariously energetic and ought to keep him in good physical condition all winter. But the cast is attractive throughout—Polly Rowles as the patient mother, a little too smug for a working mother in the first scene but sound and thoroughly agreeable toward the end; Philip Loeb, comical and effective as a bank president who knows how to time his remarks for the skeptical humor that is in them; Laura Pierpont, a good trouper and a warm-hearted delight as a housekeeper with opinions.

As the two older sisters, Mary Hartig and Lois Smith are bubbly and enchanting. And Nancy Malone as the troubled football player gives a first-rate performance that becomes more sensitive as the evening progresses and finishes as something shyly triumphant. Don't forget Conrad Janis as an intolerably conceited football star and Larry Robinson as a young swain with many problems. And don't overlook Roland Wood's grinning, dogmatic high school principal who is set in his ways.

Although "Time Out for Ginger" as a play is a little unsteady on its pins, it is fresh, warm-hearted and funny.

DAILY NEWS

November 27, 1952

'Time Out for Ginger' a Pleasant And Outdated Domestic Comedy

By JOHN CHAPMAN

There was a time when Broadway had time enough for a nice little play like "Time Out for Ginger," but I think last evening's opening of this piece at the Lyceum Theatre came quite a few years too late.

There is nothing really wrong with this comedy by Ronald Alexander, for it endorses all the right sentiments attributed to family life—but there is nothing really right with it, either. It is a pleasant piece about parenthood, pleasantly and easily played by Melvyn Douglas and Polly Rowles, but it is about as exciting as a banana split.

Mr. Douglas and Miss Rowles have begot three daughters who are now teen-agers. Two are pretty and feminine, but the third, Ginger, is so much of a tomboy that she makes the high school football squad. This delights Ginger's father, and when she runs for a touchdown (a feat cynically arranged by both teams), Papa goes as dotty as a 1929 Notre Dame alumnus. Subsequently, Ginger discovers that she'd rather be a girl and wear a pretty frock, and the hell with football.

No Real Trouble.

There are some other elements in Mr. Alexander's elementary plot, such as Douglas getting in trouble with his boss at the bank for endorsing the principle of self-determination, even if it means that an 80-pound female moppet decides that she is going to be a halfback on the varsity team. This trouble at the bank isn't serious, because Philip Loeb is the president and Loeb can't be serious.

Douglas plays the role of father with nice warmth, and Miss Rowles makes an attractive mate for him. Nancy Malone, as the tomboy Ginger, is a promising little recruit from TV, and Mary Hartig and Lois Smith are sweet and pretty as her sisters. Laura Pierpont plays the family's housemaid just as though families still had family housemaids.

I'd like to put in a special word for Eldon Elder's living room set. It's solid, as well as good-looking. The stairs don't jiggle when actors run up them. The front door really slams when one shuts it. The swinging door to the kitchen actually swings without threatening the entire wall with a cave-in. The way they usually build sets these days, this is a dramatic triumph.

New York Post

November 28, 1952

By Richard Watts Jr.

The Daughter Who Played Football

If you happen to have an adolescent daughter and she wants to be a football player, Ronald Alexander's "Time Out for Ginger," which opened at the Lyceum Theater Wednesday night, may be just the play for you. If, however, the problem strikes you as somewhat academic, I'm not quite so sure. The new comedy contemplating this momentous issue is friendly, modest and pleasantly acted, and I liked it as well as I did "Bernardine," but then I was the lone sullen dissenter concerning that earlier survey of the current status of the younger generation.

With two comedies on the topic already at hand and at least one other somewhere in the offing, it is clear that the matter of adolescence is close to the hearts of contemporary playwrights. "Time Out for Ginger" is, in a way, more comprehensive than most similar studies, since its cast of adolescents includes not only the three daughters of the liberal banker, who is its central figure, but the liberal banker, himself, who is also the most childish of the lot. I thought the poor fellow was quite a trial, despite Melvyn Douglas' expert playing.

Athletic Daughter

Anyway, Mr. Douglas appears as a loquacious father, who is given to sounding off on the right of the young to lead their own lives and is momentarily alarmed to find that his youngest daughter wants to play football on the high school team. The alarm doesn't last long, though, before the idea begins to delight him, because he'd never had that son he wanted and, the first thing you know, he's calling the bewildered Ginger "Son." He becomes her most ardent fan and behaves in a manner to make the football alumnus in "The Male Animal" seem a grave pedant.

Although football playing and

bewilderment at being told that boys and girls are not alike provide the complexity of life for the most youthful of the Carols, the two older girls likewise have their problems. Jeannie, for example, wants to be an actress and can't make up her mind whether the young stage director is a brute or a darling, while Joan has a chance to act in the school play but doesn't want to. For want of anything much better to do, they spend a lot of time rumpling their father's hair with playful admiration.

No Pretensions

Save for the fact that the father's eternal juvenilities make him a well-meaning bore, there is nothing particularly wrong with "Time Out for Ginger." It has some amusing lines and some entertaining moments, and there is an air of amiable unpretentiousness about it that is disarming. It merely isn't particularly exhilarating in any way. Furthermore, I can't get away from the suspicion that a few more of these admiring little comedies about the charm of adolescence could bring the entire institution of youth into disrepute.

No one can deny that Mr. Douglas works shrewdly and heroically to make the idiot father a likable fellow and has more success with it than might have been expected. Polly Rowles brings a helpfully humorous tolerance to the role of the long-suffering wife, and Philip Loeb is of great assistance as the equally tolerant bank president. Mary Hartig, as the oldest daughter, is the most beautiful young actress of the season, while Lois Smith, as the actress daughter, and Nancy Malone, as the football one, are believable; and Conrad Janis, as an obstreperous youth, indicates again what a good young actor he is.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

November 27, 1952

'Time Out for Ginger'

By WALTER F. KERR

"TIME OUT FOR GINGER" was first tried out down in Texas, where it seemed to need a little work. It was subsequently tried on the New England summer circuit, where it still needed work. It was tried out once more at the Lyceum Wednesday night. It doesn't need work. It needs rest.

Ronald Alexander has written a remarkably giddy play, even for a farce. Mr. Alexander starts us out with a fairly staid banker who needs some sort of creative release and finds it in lecturing to local high school classes on the need for self-fulfillment. So far, so good With Melvyn Douglas to play the banker, we're even ahead.

It quickly develops, however, that one of Mr. Douglas' daughters—the youngest of three—has been very much impressed by her father's exhortations. She has further decided that her own true fulfillment can best be realized by going out for the football team.

This leads to things. It leads, not unnaturally I suppose, to a whole spate of scenes in which the high school principal, the president of father's bank, and each member of the family in turn—there are five of them, remember—heatedly debate the pros and cons of permitting girls to don mudguards.

It leads to jokes about daughter's taking a tuck in her uniform, to a moment in which an enthusiastic housekeeper delivers a locker-room pep talk in the living room, to another in which father bursts upon us in a raccoon coat, and to such badinage as the following:

"The coach has been keeping her under wraps."

"Well, it's been getting awfully cold out."

The actors made a pretense of wincing over this particular mot, but it would take more than a wince to square it.

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To go on—as Mr. Alexander resolutely did—"Time Out for Ginger" explores the comical possibilities of having the children of the family contemptuously snort "Parents!", of having the redoubtable Ginger come home from a practice session in the line to ask: "Is there a difference between girls and boys?", and of having one of her older sisters get the lead in the class play so that she can sprout a pronounced stage accent and take to posturing on the balcony. In its whimsical, if not exactly whirlwind, course, the play further asks us to believe that father's job at the bank and perhaps the entire financial structure of the community, is in danger because of Ginger's extracurricular activities. And for a warmhearted finish, we are given no less than three "Junior Misses," traipsing one by one down a handy staircase in their brand-new evening gowns. The material is weary, the handling stubbornly routine.

In all fairness, it must be confessed that Mr. Alexander has scratched out a few funny lines. They seem funniest when Polly Rowles, as the cheerfully resigned wife and mother, is saying them. Miss Rowles goes to work with a fine, catlike smirk, and the dexterity with which she is able to slip both a purr and a scratch into the same line is delectable. At one point in the evening Mr. Douglas was heard to remark that the old girl was still more attractive than the children, and he now has two votes on that.

• • •

Mr. Douglas himself is valiant, if never exactly victorious. He manages a nice foolish air when he is fatuously accepting a compliment, he is splendidly flustered when his remarks are taken all too literally, and he doesn't spare himself a bit when he must charge through the "Male Animal" business of acting out an incoherent football play. Nancy Malone is the Ginger of the piece, and she wrinkles her nose very prettily. Her characterization, however, is largely confined to slitting her eyes, sucking in her breath, and looking fierce enough to intimidate the abashed boy who is secretly fond of her. Philip Loeb has some first-rate moments as the bank president who is forced to join an unorthodox snake dance around his sacrosanct lobby, and Conrad Janis is as adroit as ever as one of those violently hep adolescents.

But "Time Out for Ginger," with its antic and implausible manufacture, is the sort of play that ought to go lie down someplace, and last night I think it did.

Daily Mirror

November 27, 1952

'Ginger' Is a Comedy With Lapses

By WALTER WINCHELL
(Tombore)

At The Lyceum Theatre on 45th Street last night Ronald Alexander's first effort, "Time Out For Ginger," brought back Melvyn Douglas and an attractive cast. The audience appeared in a holiday mood at most of it, despite its pedestrian pace. This observer counted at least a dozen robust howls, but the lulls outnumbered the laughs.

The Carol family is a personable group The three teen-age daughters (one a tom-boy) are familiar to all of us who are grown up. But the author is juvenile about them a good deal of the time. His theme deals with progressive parents, who believe in permitting children to act their ages. As papa says in his speeches at the school: "No one should be forced to do anything he does not wisn to do"

But it is slow, tedious, the laughter comes at widely scattered intervals, and your patience is spent. Ours was, that is. The first spectators sat in their seats to reward it with several curtains. Perhaps they were embracing the players instead of the show.

Douglas, always an agreeable actor, sets whatever tempo the play enjoys. His stage presence and experience dominate the evening. Not always, because many of the other players appeared unsure and frightened. Polly Rowles, dimples and all (as Mrs. Carol) seemed the most natural from curtain to curtain.

The daughters, Mary Hartig, Lois Smith and Nancy Malone, are the other attractions. They, too, gave the mildly amusing comedy, some of its Broadway flavor. Larry Robinson and Conrad Janis served. Laura Pierpont, Roland Wood and Philip Loeb support.

Shepard Traube, Gordon Pollock and Don Hershey are the sponsors. Traube directed. The lone setting and the illumination are blamed on Eldon Elder.

"Time Out For Ginger," the author's first play to reach Broadway, is not sturdy enough to compete on The Street of Hits.

"Oedipus Tyrannus"

Journal American

November 25, 1952

Pageant of Beauty, Motion and Strength

By JOHN McCLAIN

THE National Theatre of Greece last night presented at the Mark Hellinger Theatre the second and last in their series of classics delivered in modern Greek.

This was a highly stylized production of "Oedipus Tyrannus," with Alexis Minotis and Katina Paxinou, and it is a pageant of such strength, movement and beauty, that students of the theatre will be rewarded even though the language is Greek.

The story is told in one setting, a panorama of the entrance to Oedipus' palace. Here the entire tragedy unfolds; his discovery that he has killed his father, that his wife is actually his mother; his final act of blinding himself with his own hands.

Chorus Unrivaled

Apart from the central characters, Minotis as Oedipus, Miss Paxinou as Jocasta, there are four or five supporting players who succeed equally beyond the limitations of an unintelligible tongue in bringing depth and meaning to this great Sophoclean drama. It is a technique dependent mostly upon voice and gesture, relying for movement upon the male chorus.

This chorus of 14 bearded gentlemen in long robes moves through the evening with a precision of speech and posture unrivaled by the Rockettes.

At one point they even break into a slow shuffle to the accompaniment of some properly sombre off-stage music, at other times they break formation and disperse about the stage, but in each charade they are adding to the mood of the moment.

Absorbing

There are, of course, long declamatory speeches during which there is little other action, and the excrutiating agony of the ending, while Oedipus is having his eyes out, seems interminable. These are times when one should understand the language or go out for a smoke.

"OEDIPUS TYRANNUS"

Play by Sophocles; translated into modern Greek by Photos Politis; music by Katina Paxinou; staged by Alexis Minotis; scenery by C. Clonis; costumes by Antonios Phocas; choreography by Agapi Evangelidou; presented by the National Theatre of Greece and Guthrie McClintic at the Mark Hellinger Theatre, November 24, 1952. The cast:

Oedipus.....Alexis Minotis
Priest.....Basil Kanakis
Creon.....N. Hadziscos
Teiresias.....J. Apostolides
Jocasta.....Katina Paxinou
Shepherd.....P. Zervos
Attendant....Nicos Paraskevas
Messenger.....St. Vocovitch
Chorus Leader.....
Thanos Cotsopoulos

It is nevertheless an absorbing experience for drama devotees and serious classical followers. But it is by no means popular entertainment.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

November 25, 1952

'Oedipus' Language Universal

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

The National Theater of Greece again left an indelible impression on New York first nighters last night with its second production here, "Oedipus Tyrannus."

Like "Electra," this offering has a nobility unknown to contemporary theater. The poetic tragedy is presented by the visiting company with all the grandeur and purity and visual beauty it deserves.

The story, of course, is revealed by exposition, so that the actual climax comes each time with the shock of realization. Oedipus precipitates his own downfall by attempting to rid Thebes of the plague. Little by little he is made to realize that he has killed the former King and married his own mother. He blinds himself and quits the land forever.

Speech Carries Points.

The form of Greek tragedy demands that all the play's points be conveyed in speech, rather than in action. Despite the fact that an onlooker here may understand not one word of the tongue, the action is made clear through the force of the leading players and the emphasis of the chorus.

In "Oedipus" the chorus seems even more fluid than it was in "Electra." A wider vocal range, including a purely musical chant, is required of it. This group of men is able to express such emotional nuance, such subtle vocal phrasing, and such clear facial expression and positive bodily gesture, that it becomes a superhuman character in itself.

Sense of Tragedy.

Alexis Minotis plays Oedipus with a fine sense of poetic tragedy. He is manly of stature and is capable of a touching nobility of posture. If his vocal range seems limited, or he rarely achieves the soaring effect of highest tragedy, it can only be because he is in the company of Katina Paxinou, here playing the Queen, Jocasta, who is an actress of great attitudes and feverish intensities.

In a comparatively short role, she dominates the stage. Her voice changes elastically from a honeyed treble to the bass whir of a buzz saw. She uses the draperies of her costume to augment the line of her body and limbs, as well as to define emotional periods. As a performer she has a rich combination of great authority and awesome shamelessness.

Once more the stage is designed by C. Clonis in classic lines of the grayish-tan color of old putty, so the walls look timeless and take lights warmly. The music, which Miss Paxinou has composed, is more often than not the expression of big, soft, percussive rhythms that resound through the shorter beats, and clicks of trumpet or block.

The whole play has a ritual intensity that springs in no small part from the grace of the chorus. It may groan out loud, or barely sway in unison at a spoken phrase. Or it may underline a whole change of mood with a silent altering of the stage composition. The perfection of its exquisitely orchestrated part in the play last night left the crowd breathless over and over again.

New York Post

November 25, 1952

By Vernon Rice

Visitors From Athens' Second Play

Much of the majesty and deep, tragic splendor the Greek National Theater brought with its opening play, "Electra" last week at the Mark Hellinger, was duplicated production-wise last night in "Oedipus Tyrannus," the second of Sophocles' tragedies to be presented here by the troupe. It will end the visitors from Athens short stay Sunday afternoon.

Lack of knowledge of the modern Greek language into which the play has been translated by Photos Politis, does not keep back appreciation of the authentic classical and formal manner in which Alexis Minotis has staged his starring vehicle, nor the way the male chorus has been boldly integrated into the body of the drama.

The lyric movement, found last week in the women's chorus of "Electra," has been carried over to the men's, and gives firm stabilization and balance to the play's rhythmic beat. It serves as the heart through which all the production's eloquence flows.

The basic ancient pattern of C. Clonis' set design for "Electra" was used in "Oedipus," but this time the walls were more closed in to create suffocating and non-escaping doom.

If language is no barrier in the understanding of this tragedy of fate's greatness, it does not keep an attentive audience from realizing that Menotis does not give to the title role the power, the dynamic variety or the mounting agony his wife, Katina Paxinou, gave to "Electra" or gives to her present role of Jocasta.

The important inquisition scene with the shepherd, in which Oedipus learns what he already suspects, that he unknowingly killed his father and married his mother, Jocasta, has none of the gripping terror and electrifying suspense to make it the horrendous experience it should be.

All those who saw the Old Vic's production of "Oedipus Rex" with Laurence Olivier in the title part during the English troupe's visit here in 1946, will never forget Olivier's deep-bellied and animal-piercing cry that swept through the theater and into the audience's bones, when Oedipus blinded himself. By comparison, Minotis' wail indicated Oedipus received only a minor injury.

Mme. Paxinou, however, is not one to let an emotion go by unnoticed. Everybody in last night's audience knew how she felt about Jocasta's incestuous state. She only has to sag her body and give a low moan and the frightening secret was out. Whenever she is on the stage the drama takes on expected classic stature.

Thanos Cotsopoulos has eloquent variety as the Chorus Leader and P. Zervos gives authority to the shepherd's role. Creon is supposed to be sternly aloof, but N. Hadziscos seems to be carrying his aloofness too far.

Mme. Paxinou's music underscores the play's tragic impact and Antonios Phocas has created costumes made from especially woven material to blend with the authenticity of the overall production.

Theater-lovers should see this production of "Oedipus," for physically it has majestic and haunting beauty, unharmed by only competent playing of the title role.

In presenting the plays chronologically, Guthrie McClintic, the local sponsor, was forced to serve the best portion of the two-course meal first.

New York Herald Tribune

November 25, 1952

'Oedipus Tyrannus'

By WALTER F. KERR

THE closing moments of the "Oedipus," which the Greek National Theater is offering at the Hellinger, rise to a pitch of exhilerating dramatic power. From the time that Katina Paxinou, as Jocasta, anticipates the terrifying truth that is about to destroy this royal household and staggers in revulsion from that husband who is also her son, an electrifying intensity seems to take hold of the company. When Alexis Minotis, as the Oedipus, whose doom is now sealed, stumbles forth from the palace—blinded, calling for his children, asking in anguish that a just vengeance be meted out to him—he achieves the sort of vigor, fire, and tragic warmth we have been waiting for all evening. And the very end of the play—as the blinded Oedipus senses the chorus' desire to help him but insists on making his own halting way—is deeply moving.

But the earlier portions of Sophocles' master work seem a little dry, a shade prosaic, in the staging which Mr. Minotis has here given it. What are usually thought of as the detective-story passages are played at a fairly monotonous level, with little of that spiraling excitement and unflagging drive which have always been characteristic of this eternally fascinating story.

It is altogether possible, of course, that this relative flatness is not in the playing but in the language barrier which cuts us off from Photos Politis' modern Greek arrangement. The muted, sometimes matter-of-fact, accents that are sounded on the Hellinger stage may convey something taut and tingling to those who are able to follow its verbal nuances.

I supect, however, that in scaling the original rhetoric down to the purposes of the modern Greek stage, something of the grandeur, and something of the sting has been lost. I suspect, too, that Mr. Minotis has, in his own performance, made too great a compromise with a naturalistic acting style. He gives us a crisp, clean, straightforward Oedipus, almost a business like Oedipus. There are very good things in it—the cagey guile with which he prods Teiresias into revealing more than he intends to, the sharp venom of his attack on Creon—and the performance as a whole, in its native tongue, is probably an extraordinarily plausible one. But it would not seem to be an exceptionally poetic one, and much of the music, as well as much of the magic, goes out of a challenging role.

The evening strikes its first really forceful note with the entrance of Teiresias. J. Apostolides, as the ancient seer, brings a great deal of the majesty, and a sense of the mystery, of this venerable legend onto the stage with him. Phrasing his lines with enormous dramatic effect and dominating the ensemble with a remarkable economy of gesture, Mr. Apostolides is a compelling figure.

Thereafter the production takes its main energy from Miss Paxinou. The role of Jocasta is not a long one, but this dynamic and inventive actress has found great richness in it. She brings regal serenity to the moment in which she interrupts a clash between her husband and her brother. She has a fund of tenderness for the scene in which she must comfort and reassure the distraught Oedipus. She is brilliant in her first faint suggestion that an undefined fear has begun to eat at her own heart, and extremely touching in her ecstatic relief as things take a momentary, and ironic, turn for the better.

S. Vocovitch handles the role of the Messenger who reports Oedipus' final despair with great skill, and Thanos Cotsopoulous again displays striking vocal power as the Leader of the Chorus. The chorus itself is less interestingly managed than in last week's "Electra." The problem is more acute here and choreographer Agapi Evangelidou has been forced to struggle for a balance between the ritual measures of dance and the more realistic functions which this body of city elders must perform. The voice work continues strong and melodic—notably in the hushed intensity of the chorus' first address to the audience—but the stylized movement is a little uncertain in form and uncomfortable in execution.

Reservations apart, there is dignity and a final compulsive excitement about this visiting "Oedipus," and it remains a "must" for the serious student of the theater.

The New York Times

November 25, 1952

'Oedipus Tyrannus' Is Second Bill Put On by Greek National Theatre

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Since "Oedipus Tyrannus" is a more powerful tragedy than "Electra," the second bill of the Greek National Theatre is the more impressive one. Alexis Minotis and Katina Paxinou appeared in the two chief parts in a masterly performance at the Mark Hellinger Theatre last evening where the production will remain through next Sunday's matinee.

If the entrepreneurs of the Greek visitation are happy about the reception here, they can rest assured that their audiences are happy, too. Despite the stubborn fact that the Sophocles tragedies are played in a language incomprehensible to most of us, the performances are illuminating and exalting on a high plane of formal art. Most of us have never had a chance to look so deep into the heart of a Greek classical drama.

* * *

In comparison with "Electra," "Oedipus" is more compact, and the performance is more concise and dramatic. For the story of how Oedipus learns the awful truth about his fate is told with deliberate suspense in a style that approximates the modern manner. Again, C. Clonis has filled the stage with an imposing scene depicting the steps to a royal palace. The costumes by Antonios Phocas are formal without being severe. And the musical accompaniment, composed by Miss Paxinou, lightly underscores the dramatic episodes in the performance.

Although Mr. Minotis and Miss Paxinou are starred in the program (which, incidentally neglects to mention the name of the author), the performance is a completely integrated work of art, as impersonal and as majestic as the drama. The acting is in the heroic style. The pace is deliberate; the groupings are planned for dramatic symmetry; the sound of the voices has the resonance of impassioned speech about terrible things. Nothing of use in the telling of a mighty fable is wasted in this articulate performance

* * *

It is hard to imagine how the acting could be improved. Mr. Minotis' Oedipus is royal without being aloof to the personal crises of the story. Without losing regal authority, he hangs on every word that the shepherds from the hills bring unwillingly to the palace. Although Miss Paxinou's portrait of the queen is also larger than life, it is compassionate and human. N. Hadziscos' cautious Creon who does not want to face the truth; Basil Kanakis' patriarchal priest who brings news more frightening than he imagines, and the shepherd of P. Zervos—are all played with individual flavor and with respect for the unity of the whole performance.

But, as in the case of "Electra," the staging of the chorus is the most stunning contribution of the Greek National Theatre productions. It is a male chorus for "Oedipus"—bearded, gowned in subdued colors. Under the direction of Agapi Evangelidou, the chorus both judges and participates in the action, like an idealized instrument of public opinion. Although the gestures and the movements are perfectly synchronized, they are not spectacular, but spontaneous and unobtrusive. If it is possible for acting to be natural and stately at the same time, this is it.

In mastering the function of the chorus, the Greek National Theatre has mastered the art of playing Greek classical drama as a whole. Every moment of "Oedipus Tyrannus" is alive and beautiful.

DAILY NEWS

November 25, 1952

'Oedipus' Played by Home Team

By ROBERT SYLVESTER

A persistently traditional version of "Oedipus Tyrannus" was declaimed last night at the Mark Hellinger Theatre by the visiting National Theatre of Greece—an outfit which must know more about the legend than most others.

Alexis Minotis is starred in the tragic drama of Oedipus, who learned about sex from his mother and learned about murder from practicing on his father. Katina Paxinous is Jocasta and also wrote a chromatic score.

The Classic Poses

The Greek company acts in classic but often monotonous poses. Minotis orates his endless speeches while the male chorus makes visual patterns and designs. All attention is riveted on the character of Oedipus but Oedipus speaks and faces straight out toward the audience. Thus, the static chorus poses sometimes turn from Greek frieze into deep freeze.

The authentic costumes of Antonios Phocas were striking and, as the drama's director, Minotis has carefully chosen his supporting actors according to voice. All the voices are in interesting contrast.

N. Hadziscos makes a handsome Creon, Basil Kanakis is a spectacular priest and J. Apostolides a sonorous Teiresias. There is a single setting which is basically two levels of wide stairs. Note: Traditional or not, the current Oedipus wears Adler Elevator Shoes of extreme design.

Daily Mirror

November 25, 1952

'Oedipus Tyrannus' Okayed By Mirror Night Club Editor

By LEE MORTIMER

When I offered to pinch-hit for the ailing Robert Coleman, I had no idea I'd be called on to cover "Oedipus Tyrannus," by Sophocles, the Eugene O'Neill of the Hellenes. But that is just what happened when the National Theatre of Greece unfolded the second of its cycle of Sophoclean tragedies at the Mark Hellinger last night. I will freely admit at the outset that a lifetime spent writing about chorus cuties and Hollywood glamor dolls, ill prepared me for the task.

As a sort of hedge, I brought along a young person of Japanese antecedents who took a year of classical Greek at the University of Hawaii under an Irish professor; however this production is played in modern Greek, so we didn't have a word for it. Instead, I should have taken Joe, my favorite counterman at the Greasy Vest.

Though handicapped by language, I quickly discovered "Oedipus Tyrannus" is merely a Sunday title for "Oedipus Rex," which, as all readers of the supplements and popular-science books know, is the chief prop behind the psychoanalysis racket. Just because King Oedipus married his mother by mistake a couple of milleniums ago, you now have bad dreams, according to the docs.

Alexis Minotis gives a wonderfully frightening performance as the king who goes mad when he discovers the plague which ravages his land is divine retribution for his incestuous marriage.

Katina Paxinou (no stranger to these shores), Oedipus' queen and mother, handles her fairly unimportant role importantly, if one who doesn't know what it's all about is to judge from externals.

The play, as those who read it in English may recall, is long on speechifying and short on action, and has no intermissions, which was the custom of the time before audiences ducked out for a fast in-between-the-acts snifter.

Even to my ears, it seemed that the entire cast went through its strange mumbo-jumbo with something approaching brilliance. Anyway it was an experience I do not regret, but I'm wondering when Bob Coleman is due back.

Guthrie McClintic and ANTA, who arranged this short tour of the Greek thespians, scheduled the very distinguished production for one week only. While its competition will not empty the saloons or leg shows, it should appeal to more than the local Greek colony and the big-domes, including those who just act that way.

"Occupe-toi d'Amelie"

New York Post

November 25, 1952

By Richard Watts Jr.

The Visiting French Grow Rowdy

The talented visitors from France were in a distinctly roguish mood at the Ziegfeld Theater last night. What Jean-Louis Barrault and his colleagues were giving us was nothing less than a frank and unashamed bedroom farce of the beginning of the century, Georges Feydeau's "Occupe-toi d'Amelie," and very bawdy, outrageous and primitively hilarious it is, too. They do it, as usual, with great style and relish and the slyest of humor. It is, I thought, a lot of fun, and I suspect it is just as well for them and us that they act it in their native tongue.

"Occupe-toi d'Amelie"—a title which the visitors translate officially and perhaps rather primly as "Keep an Eye on Amelie"—has one of those complicated farcical plots about faithless wives, rich uncles, lovers caught in embarrassing predicaments and women hiding under beds, but it really isn't very difficult to follow. At least, there is enough simple physical humor of one kind or another to keep things moving in a steadily comic fashion, and I don't think you will be in much doubt about the general tenor of the proceedings.

Basic Humor

According to Marcel Achard, another French playwright, Feydeau "reaches poetry — comical logarithmic poetry." He adds that "change a single word in a sentence and the laugh is lost." I am in no position to tell you about this, but I do know that, with a perhaps sketchy idea of what the farce was about and what was actually being said, I was almost constantly amused last night. There is something of the basic universal humor of the old silent movie comedies in it, and the pantomime alone makes for winningly shameless entertainment.

Even to those of us who are less than at our ease in listening to French, there can be no doubt that the story of Amelie and her lovers is fairly daring for this vicinity. I'll have to take on faith M. Achard's belief that the play is also a masterpiece of its kind. But even if its literary merit is closer to that of the burlesque show than such admiration would admit, there is no doubt that the company at the Ziegfeld lifts it into the realm of theatrical art by the gayety, spirit, ingenuity and comic style of the playing.

Madeleine Renaud

Although M. Barrault has staged the play, he confines himself to a minor role in it, and his wife, Madeleine Renaud, takes over for the evening. Her performance of the title part is quite a masterpiece of slyness and grace, of acting with comic rowdiness and still maintaining delicacy of touch. Of the other actresses, Elina Labourdette, as a faithless wife, is both beautiful and humorous, and Simone Valere, in the small role of a maid, again demonstrates that she is a player of rare charm and skill. Then, there are a dozen notable performances by the men of the company.

The chances are that I am skipping several portrayals that deserve commendation, but there are some I want to be sure to include. Jean-Pierre Granval, who has a wonderful comedy face, as a half-bold, half-shy servant; Beauchamp, with his bogus dignity, as Amelie's father; Charles Mahieu, as the rich and bewildered uncle; Jean Juillard and Jacques Dacqmine as a general and a prince, respectively, and Jean Desailly, as a young man of intrigues—here are complete and brilliant comic performances in a boldly hilarious comic prank.

"OCCUPE-TOI D'AMELIE"

Farce by Georges Feydeau; staged by Jean-Louis Barrault; decor by Felix Labisse; costumes by Jean-Denis Malcles; presented by S. Hurok at the Ziegfeld Theatre, November 24, 1952. The cast:

Amelie.....Madeleine Renaud
Yvonne.....Anne Carrere
Palmyre.....Simone Matil
Bibichon.....Jacques Galland
Valcreuse..Jean-Francois Calve
Boas.....Jean-Claude Michel
Adonis....Jean-Pierre Granval
Pochet.....Beauchamp
Etienne.....Gabriel Cattand
Irene.....Elina Labourdette
Marcel Courbois..Jean Desailly
Van Putzeboum..Charles Mahieu
Koschnadieff.....Jean Juillard
Le Prince...Jacques Dacqmine
Charlotte.....Simone Valere
Mouilletu..Jean-Louis Barrault
Le Maire.....Regis Outin
Virginie.....Anne Geffe
Cornette.....Pierre Sonnifer

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

November 26, 1952

'Amelie' Is a Romp For Great Renaud

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

It is a romp of wicked deliciousness that the Renaud-Barrault company is indulging in with "Occupe-Toi d'Amelie," well translated "Keep Your Eye on Amelie."

Barrault has explained the Feydeau work as being on the order of operetta without the music. By that he means that it is comedy which must be played with the same artifice and high speed rhythm that we usually associate with musical theater. One climax follows right on another and the situations are exaggerated for the one end of broad satire.

"Amelie" is a comedy of pure French temperament and lilt, the sort that inspired a whole school of so-called bedroom farces here, as well as the heavy-handed shockers used as revue blackouts, and also the comedy of endlessly adolescent and wide-eyed sex, such as the Marx Brothers made such tremendous and unforgettable successes with.

From Lap to Lap.

Amelie is a girl to keep your eye on indeed, as she finds it impossible to keep off the gentlemen's laps, whenever she is not indulging in greater intimacies with them.

She is played with supreme understanding and fabulous generosity by Madeleine Renaud, who conveys perfectly the affected daintiness which circumstances can produce in this ambitious girl with a truck driver's manners. Only great charm and innate taste could permit this actress to be so vulgar without ever being coarse or ordinary.

Amelie, listening to a phonograph, resigning herself to waking in a strange bed, hiding under it for discretion's sake, or delightedly being married, are all pictures of ecstatic impudence. As Renaud depicts her, she is a creature who openly employs every artifice known to woman, but who has no time for guile. You will not forget her.

Jean Desailly has his best role of the series as the young gallant who gets so hopelessly embroiled with Amelie. He is frantic, cheerful and animated, through as wild a series of adventures as any involuntary swain ever experienced. He is particularly impressive in the agony of some elementary arithmetic, and later expressing his joy at what he thinks is his own faked wedding to Amelie.

Jacques Dacqmine is a highly formal, stuffy prince, who cannot resist his urge to bounce girls on his knee, and Charles Mahieu is once again performing in his stalwart comic vein as the godfather whose offer of money starts all the trouble.

Stock Part.

Jean-Pierre Granval gives a performance that is worth mention because it is representative of one of the entire company's greatest and most constantly surprising virtues. He is playing a stupid butler, surely a stock role. He is infinitely thorough in his characterization every moment onstage, but never once employs a trite or even familiar method of embroidering his buffoonery. It is such vast originality that makes the acting group so remarkable.

Barrault creeps into the picture for a short while near the end of the play, but leaves his mark on it, as a decisively etched old clerk, whose every muscle shows his aging acrid authority. Simone Valere is a luscious chambermaid, and Elena Labourdette is highly comic as the elegant countess.